

who showed that the labours of British naturalists are to a great degree frustrated, so far as regards weights and measures, by the intricacy and inconvenience of the English method, and its limitation to the British Islands. If an English anatomist gives the weight of the brain or lungs, for example, of some newly discovered animal in the terms of the national method, it may not be known whether he uses troy weight or avoirdupois; or if he gives the length of a bone or any other part in "lines," it is uncertain whether a "line" is the tenth or the twelfth of an inch. On the other hand, the metre, the litre, and the gramme, with their decimal multiples and subdivisions, are not only accepted and understood by cultivated persons in almost all foreign countries, but they are extensively used by British chemists and other men of science. They are learnt with the greatest ease; when once learnt, they cannot be forgotten, and their advantages are found to be indisputable. Under present circumstances, careful describers find themselves obliged to employ two systems, a bad and a good one. Professor Owen has for some time used the metric system in this way, appending the dimensions in decimal parts of the metre to the denominations of the English method. "Although," as he stated, "when the system of weight or measure is noted by the observer, its reduction in a single instance may be a small demand upon the time and attention of the reader, yet the repetition of that act takes a serious amount from the working hours of the individual; and, when multiplied by the number of students, who are obstructed by conflicting systems of weights and measures, the impediment to the progress of the sciences of observation becomes so great as to render the subject quite worthy of the consideration of legislative authority."

The Unicorn of the Ancients.

To the Editors of the Annals and Magazine of Natural History.

GENTLEMEN,—Dr. A. E. Brehm has favoured me with the following communication on the subject of the "Unicorn." As the remarks are those of an African traveller, I think they are quite worth publishing in your Magazine. Enough now of the Unicorn; *requiescat in pace!*

Your obedient Servant,

Preston Rectory, Wellington, Salop.
Dec. 8, 1862.

W. HOUGHTON.

"SIR,—In reference to your interesting paper in No. 59 of the 'Annals of Natural History,' I take the liberty to inform you that also in the interior of Africa, where I have travelled, the "Unicorn" (*Anasa* of the natives) is nothing more than the Rhinoceros. It will be interesting to you to learn that, at the present day, in the interior of Africa—for example, at Carthum (Cartoum)—drinking-vessels and cups are still made from the horn of the Rhinoceros, as they attribute to it the very same properties which Ctesias did (page 367 of your communication). They also use the horn for the purpose of making sword-handles.

"I am, Sir, yours respectfully,

"Leipzig, Dec. 2, 1862."

"A. E. BREHM."